

Good evening I'm Scott Davis, a Program Specialist at the Health Eligibility Center in Atlanta Georgia. I filed for whistleblower protection in January 2014.

I'd like to thank Chairman Miller, Ranking Member Michaud and the committee for their leadership and for providing a platform, so the voices of VA Whistleblowers can be heard.

I urge the committee to take prompt action as time is running out. Every day a window of opportunity is closing on a Veteran to receive care before irreparable harm is done to their health or mental well-being. Because of the inaction of senior VA officials, some Veterans even face the burden of being billed for care their service has earned.

As noted in the Office of Special Counsel's June 23rd report, VA leadership has repeatedly failed to respond to concerns raised by whistleblowers about patient care at VA. Despite the best efforts of truly committed employees at HEC and the Veteran Health Administration, who have risked their careers to stand up for Veterans; management at all levels ignored or retaliated against them for exposing the truth.

Critical issues reported to senior VA officials by Whistleblowers at the HEC include:

1. Mismanaging critical Veteran health programs and wasting millions of dollars on an Affordable Care Act direct mail marketing campaign.
2. The possible purging & deletion of over 10,000 Veteran health records at the Health Eligibility Center.
3. A backlog of 600,000 pending benefit enrollment applications.
4. Nearly 40,000 unprocessed applications discovered in January 2013. These were primarily applications from returning service members from Iraq and Afghanistan.

The harassment I experienced at the HEC was from top levels of management:

1. My whistleblower complaint to White House Deputy Chief of Staff Rob Nabors was leaked to my manager Sherry Williams, **who stated in writing**, that she was contacting me **on behalf of Acting Secretary Gibson and Mr. Rob Nabors**. Neither Mr. Gibson, nor Mr. Nabors have responded to that fact.
2. My employment records were illegally altered by CBO WFM, Director Joyce Deters.
3. I was illegally placed on a permanent work detail by Assistant Deputy Under Secretary, Philip Matkovsky and Acting Chief Business Officer, Stephanie Mardon.
4. I was placed on involuntary administrative leave, curiously at the same time the OIG's investigation was occurring in Atlanta by Acting HEC Director Greg Becker.

Unfortunately MY experience is not unique.

- Daron and Eileen Owens, who work at the VA Hospital in Atlanta, GA, have experienced the same retaliation for reporting medical errors and patient neglect as well as misconduct by senior VA police officials.
- Our Local 518 Union President, Daphne Ivery is routinely harassed as a direct consequence of assisting me and other disabled employees with addressing retaliatory actions by members of management. Mr. and Mrs. Owens as well as Ms. Ivery are Veterans. In fact over 50% of the 300 employees at our office are disabled Veterans.
- In 2010 allegations surfaced that applications for VA health care were being shredded at the HEC. Under the direction of the HEC Director and Deputy Director, Ms. Kimberly Hughes, Former Associate Director for Informatics and her team began to investigate this allegation. Her team discovered nearly 2,000 applications that were reported as being processed in WRAP that did not appear as new enrollees in the Enrollment System.

Ms. Hughes investigation was abruptly closed by the HEC Director's Office. Although she completed a report of her findings it is unclear whether that report was given to the OIG or whether the nearly 2,000 Veterans who sought medical care from VA ever received the health care they earned. She was also subjected to harassment and intimidation, because she dared to advocate for Veterans!

Relevance to the Committee Justifies Closer Review

The whistleblower statements, I have provided to the committee were also provided to the OIG **and are more relevant to this committee than many may realize.** I urge additional review of those whistleblower statements.

In addition to providing specific examples of whistleblower harassment to the committee, I hope my testimony provides some insight on three key issues VA management fails to address:

1. Reckless waste of federal funds and causing greater backlog of enrollments applications **for the sole purpose of achieving performance goals.**
2. Why there is resistance to implementing proper and effective processing and reporting systems and the source of that resistance, as address by Dr. Draper during her testimony.
3. The need to remove ineffective managers and the urgent need for the VA Management Accountability Act to be fully implemented, as stated by Mr. Griffin.

Why it is so critical to act quickly:

- More records and documents could be deleted or manipulated to mask backlog and mismanagement, do to system integrity issues.
- VHA is losing talented, committed individuals who continue to transfer to other agencies or are harassed to the point of resignation. The volume of EEO complaints should be examined.
- TV commercials are currently airing across the country about VA career opportunities. VA will not attract much needed health care professional to improve the quality of care, if it is known and even stated by current employees that “VA is not a place you want to work!”
- Most importantly: transitioning management, clearing backlog, restructuring care, implementing new access programs and building a quality organization will require the intervention and strong oversight by Congress.

Thank you again for this opportunity. I welcome your questions on the issues I’ve noted or any items I’ve submitted to the committee.